

Classical Empires of India



Classical India

☞ By 1000 BCE Aryans migrated to Ganges River

- By 500 BCE all the way to the Deccan plateau
- **PATRIARCHAL**

☞ Brought Caste System

- **Four castes**

- • Brahmins
- • Kshatriyas
- • Vaishyas
- • Shudras

- **Dalits** – untouchables

- **Caste system evolved as new occupations, groups were added.**

- • Jatis

- **Outlawed today but last names can reveal ancestry**

- Rural villages – practices continue in some cases

The Early Religion:

- Vedas: a group of religious hymns and poems

- As this Vedic religion spread across the subcontinent, religion in India came to reinforce the existing caste system.

THE VEDIC AGE



**THE FOUNDATIONS FOR
HINDUISM WERE
ESTABLISHED!**

India's Monsoons

- India has regular monsoons.
- •Monsoons are winds that blow regularly over the country.
- •The summer monsoons come from the Southwest and deposit massive amounts of rain inland.
- •Monsoons are needed for crop growth.

The Caste System in India

- Two important results of the caste system set India apart from other classical civilizations.
- 1) Because people readily accepted their caste as a religious duty, there was a measure of toleration among the groups.
- 2) Because the lower castes were regulated to agricultural work, there was practically no slavery in Classical India.



Stupa

Pataliputra (now Patna) is located at the confluence of the Ganges and Son Rivers in northeastern India. It was the capital city of the Mauryan Empire c. 326–184 b.c.e., when it was perhaps the largest city in the world, and again of the Gupta Empire, 320–550 c.e.

The Maurya Empire (c.350BCE - 150 BCE)

- Chandragupta Maurya = founder
- 50 million people
 - Conquered northern India
 - Centralized Government
 - Divided into *provinces*
 - Each province had a capital city and ruled by a prince who governed as a representative of the emperor
 - Each prince was assisted by a *council of ministers*
 - Provinces divided into districts governed by a minister
 - Minister in charge of bureaucrats
(maintain public health to regulation of trade)

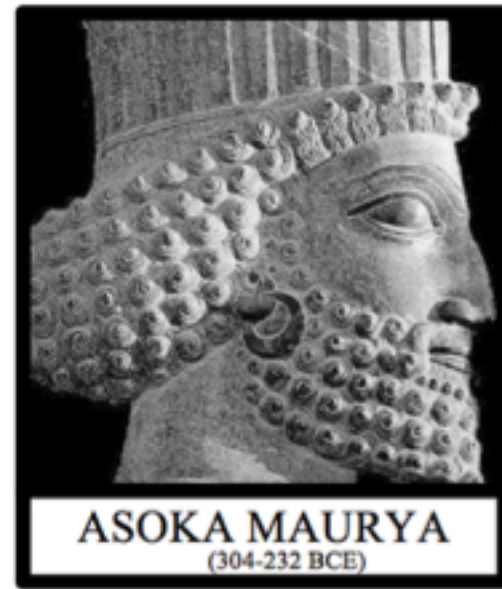


Effective Mauryan Leadership

- Large military
 - Included 9,000 elephants!
 - The army kept peace in the empire
 - Secret spy force - informed government of any unrest
- This political and military unity used regional governors to control justice and security, and let all kinds of trade expand and thrive.
- Used heavy taxes to fund government

Ashoka (Reigned 268 – 232 BCE)

- Most honored Maurya emperor
 - Was brutal military commander
 - Turned to Buddhism after war in Kalingan
- Kept records (Edicts) for his activities on carved rocks and pillars
 - Enlightened ruler, who sought to govern in accord with religious values and moral teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism
- Was involved in war, then turned to Buddhism
 - Became peaceful
 - Rule by moral example
 - Brought peace and prosperity
 - Unite his diverse empire
 - Paved the way for Buddhism in his empire
 - Ended slavery



One of the many pillars found in India today on which Ashoka's edicts were inscribed



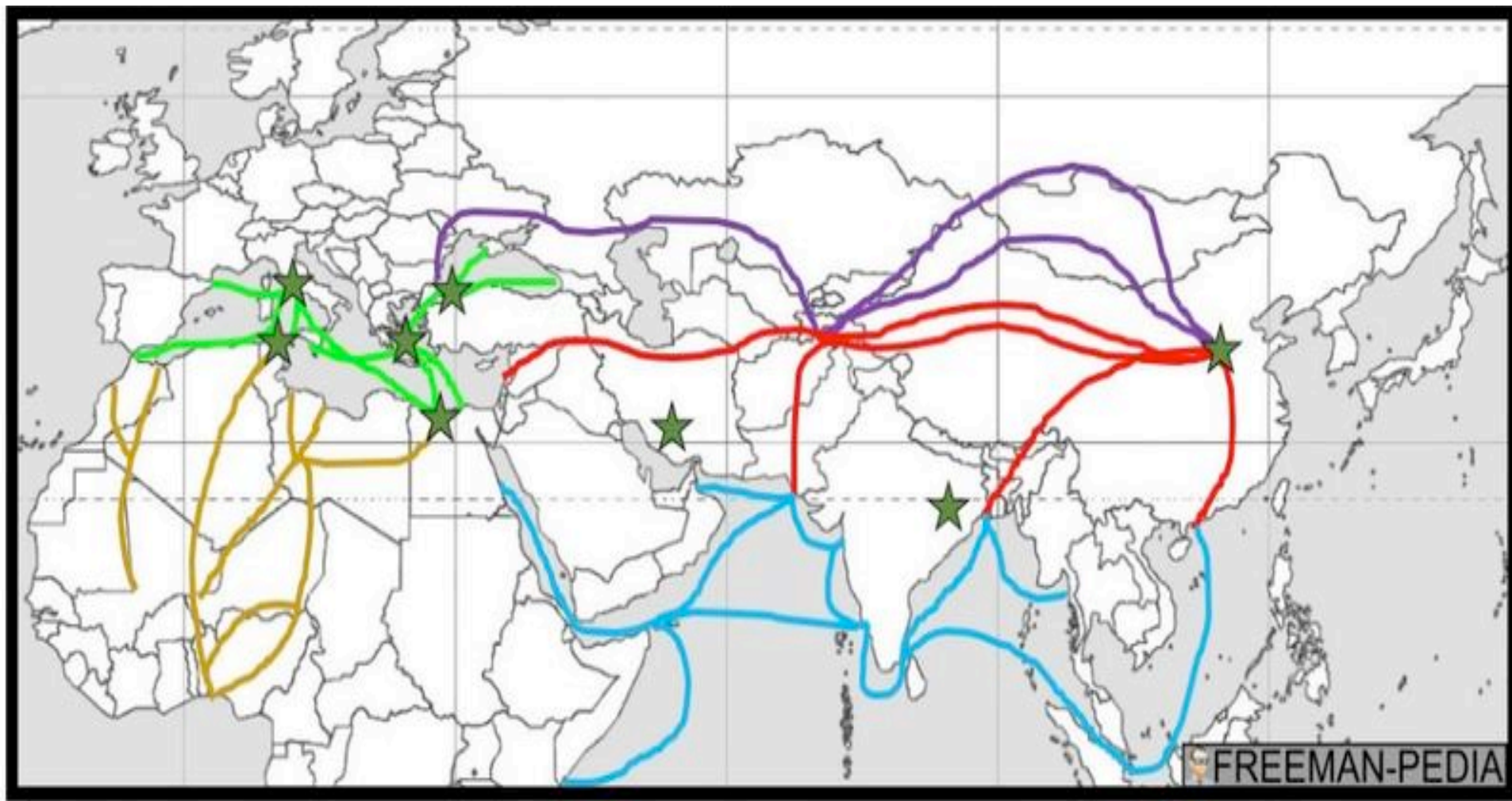
Buddhism in India/Ashoka

- Although it remained a minority religion Buddhist missionaries, went out to Bactria, Sri Lanka and other areas.
- This was one of the most significant early catalysts for the spread of Buddhism into central, east, and southeast Asia.

Mauyran Empire Achievements

- Became focal point of trade network
- Land Routes: (**SILK ROADS**) Silk and other goods from China passed through India to the Mediterranean Sea.
 - Indian merchants obtained spices and gemstones from kingdoms in Southeast Asia
 - Would trade these items, along with textiles, with the Romans
- Sea Routes: - **Indian Ocean basin**– Connected India with East Africa and Indonesia
 - Cotton textile industry - Supplied cloth to Afro-Eurasia

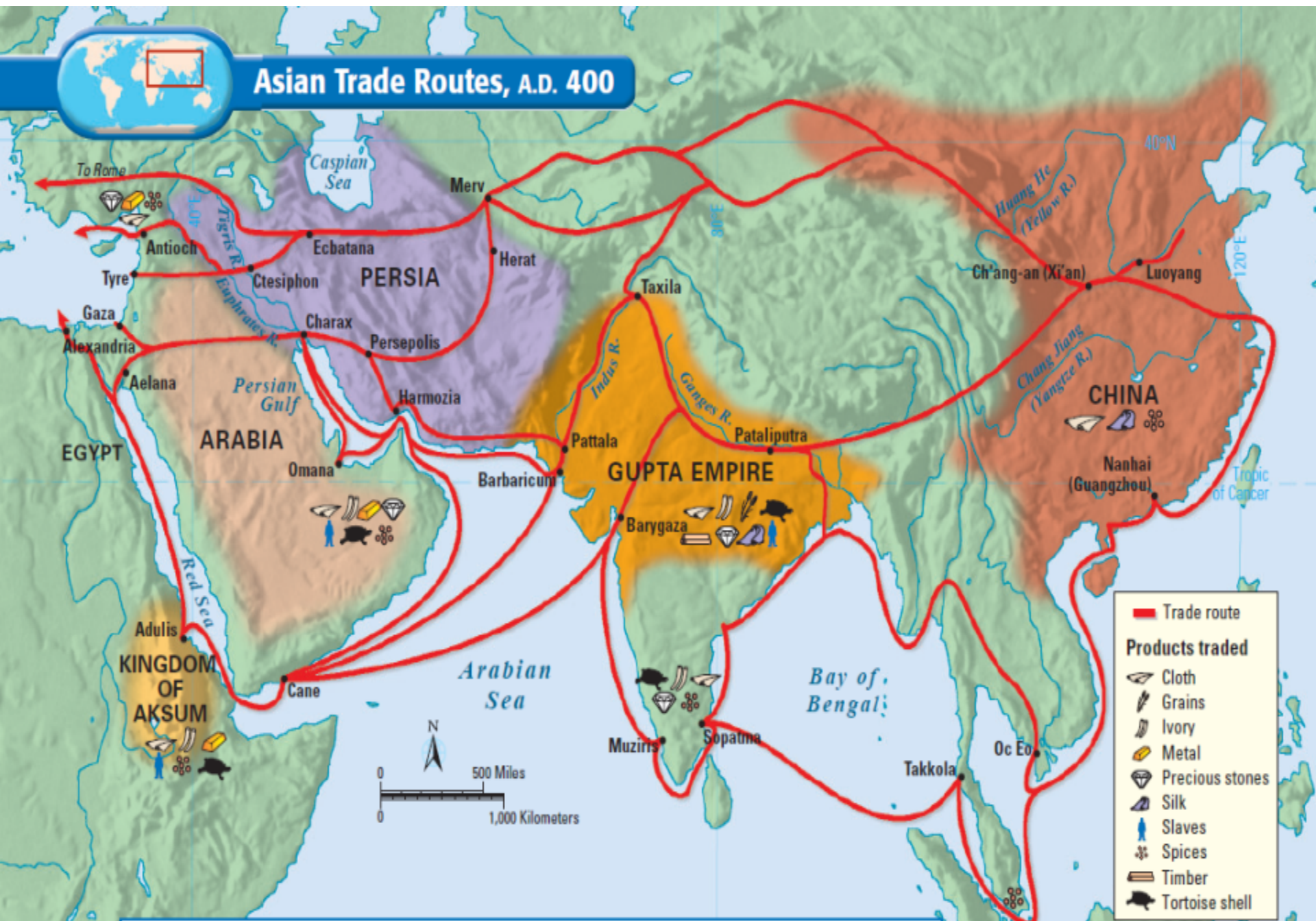
Examples of Trade Routes



- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| ■ EURASIAN | ■ SILK ROADS | ■ TRANS-SAHARAN |
| ■ INDIAN OCEAN | ■ MEDITERRANEAN SEA | |

Route	Description	What traded?	Who participated?	Cultural diffusion
Silk Road	Overland from western China to the Mediterranean Trade made possible by development of a camel hybrid capable of long dry trips	From west to east - horses, alfalfa, grapes, melons, walnuts From east to west - silk, peaches, apricots, spices, pottery, paper	Chinese, Indians, Parthians, central Asians, Romans Primary agents of trade - central Asian nomads	Chariot warfare, the stirrup, music, diversity of populations, Buddhism and Christianity, wealth and prosperity (particularly important for central Asian nomads)
Indian Ocean Trade	By water from Canton in China to Southeast Asia to India to eastern Africa and the Middle East; monsoon-controlled	Pigments, pearls, spices, bananas and other tropical fruits	Chinese, Indians, Malays, Persians, Arabs, people on Africa's east coast	Lateen sail (flattened triangular shape) permitted sailing far from coast Created a trading class with mixture of cultures, ties to homeland broken
Saharan Trade	Points in western Africa south of the Sahara to the Mediterranean; Cairo most important destination Camel caravans	Salt from Sahara to points south and west Gold from western Africa Wheat and olives from Italy Roman manufactured goods to western Africa	Western Africans, people of the Mediterranean Berbers most important agents of trade	Technology of the camel saddle - important because it allowed domestication and use of the camel for trade
Sub-Saharan Trade	Connected Africans south and east of the Sahara to one another; connected in the east to other trade routes	Agricultural products, iron weapons	Diverse peoples in sub-Saharan Africa	Bantu language, "Africanity"

Asian Trade Routes, A.D. 400



Extensive Trade: 4c



Cultural Diffusion

- Conquest and trade brought new ideas to India
 - Indian art influenced by Greece and Rome
 - “Gandhara Buddhas”



Jati

- Trade and economic growth created new skilled craft laborers and merchants
 - altered the Indian caste system.
- Individuals working in the same trade—such as textiles or metallurgy—often banded together to form guilds.
 - did not fit easily into the existing caste system
 - Became subcastes (Jati)
- Backbone
- formed their own courts through which Indian society was regulated in the absence of a strong central government.
- Thus Indian families tended to associate closely with other families involved in the same occupations as themselves
- This tendency has survived until the present.

What does it suggest about the relationships between caste, or jati, and skin color?



The image suggests a clear relationship between the development of caste identity based on ethnicity and skin color.

Gandhara Buddha

sculpture created around the 1st c. C.E. in the Kushana province of Gandhara – Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan today)



Note how the Gandhara Buddha shows the influence of the Greek style from when Alexander the Great had conquered that area (modern-day Pakistan). The Gandhara Buddha wears a toga and has wavy hair, unlike the clingy wet drapery and smooth hair of the Mathura Buddha.



The Buddha with Hercules, Afghanistan



Hellenistic culture in the Indian subcontinent:

Greek clothes, amphoras, wine and music

(Detail of Chakhil-i-Ghoundi stupa, Hadda, Gandhara, 1st century AD).



From Maurya to Gupta and Instability

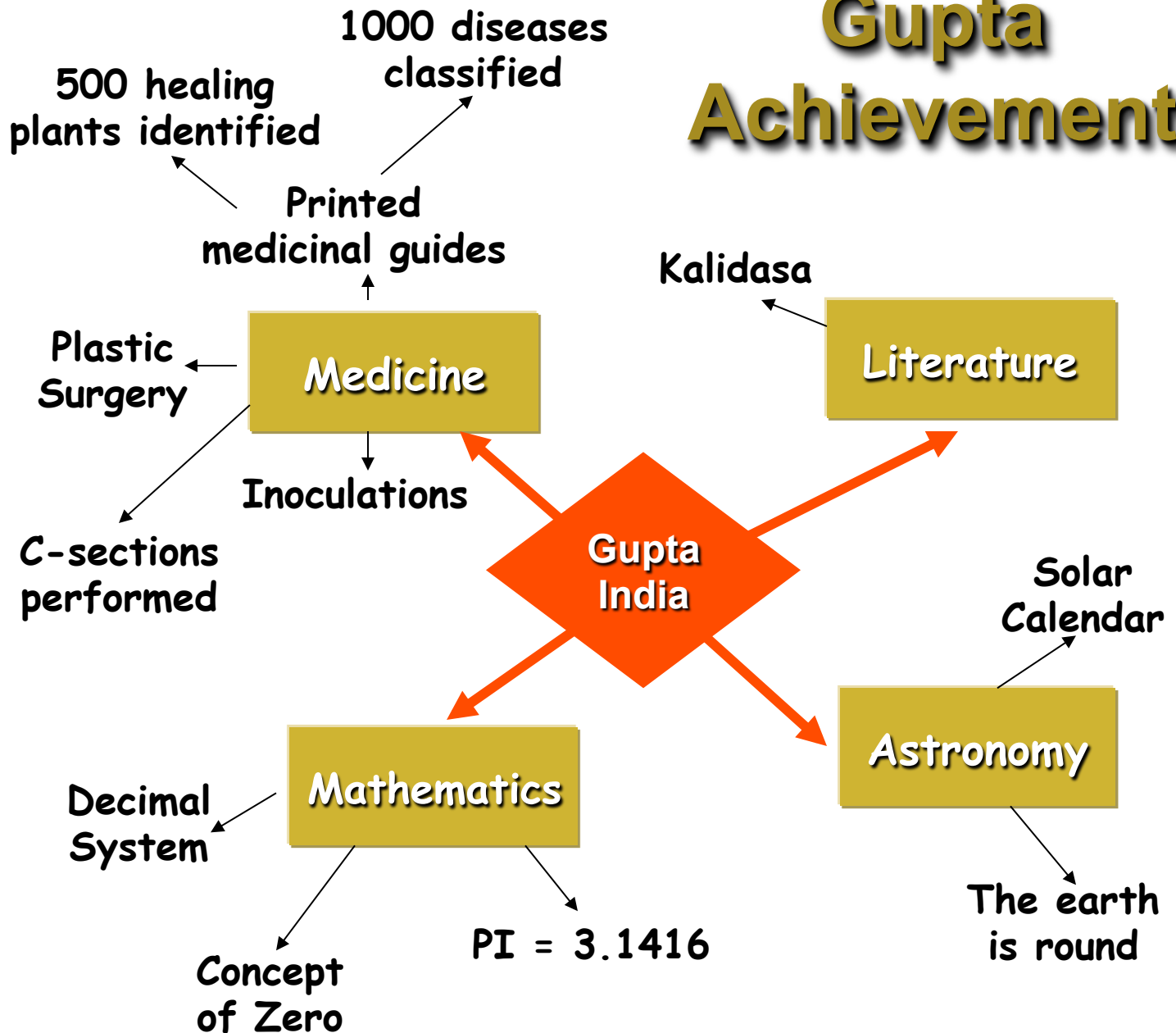
- Ashoka died, Maurya power declined
 - Rival groups battled for control
- 500 years later, Gupta dynasty unites India
 - (Golden Age)
 - **Gupta Dynasty: 375-550AD**
 - He used alliances (marriage), tribute, and conquest to “conquer”
 - left most decisions and policy-making up to local leaders
 - **Hinduism was religion of ruling dynasty, though Buddhism was tolerated.**
 - **Deterioration of the status of women; increasingly patriarchal**
 - Lost rights to inherit property and were married at a younger age
 - Sati – involved the practice of a widow throwing herself on her husband’s funeral pyre**
 - honor and purity would then come to the widow**

Gupta Empires

- **Very strong mathematics**
 - Numbers 0-9 (*Arabic numerals*)
- **Also important developments in medicine**
 - Built free hospitals and encouraged advances in medicine
 - Inoculations - vaccinations
 - astronomy and art.

Hindu	↓	०	१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९
Arabic	↓	•	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹
Medieval	↓	0	1	2	3	۴	۵	6	۷	8	9
Modern		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Gupta Achievement



Gupta Art



Greatly influenced
Southeast Asian art & architecture.

Classic Hindu Temples



Classic Hindu Temple



GUPTA DECLINE

- Gupta's left local government, administration, and policy in the hands of their allies.
- By 500, The White Huns, nomadic people, pushed further into India.
 - Began to fragment.
- Imperial government survived only a short time in India.

The Collapse of Empires

- Han Dynasty collapses 220 CE
- Roman Empire collapses 476 CE
 - Most of Western Europe will be divided into small warring states
- Greeks got absorbed by the Romans
- Indian Empires, not unified

Empires Collapsing

- Too large
- Overtaxed and expensive
- Wealth grew of large landowning families
- Peasants became impoverished
 - (Yellow Turban Rebellion in China) 184 CE
- Rivals among elites – eroded authority
 - 26 Roman Emperors – only 1 died of natural causes
- Disease (Plague in Rome)
- Growing Nomadic peoples on edge of empires - threats